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ABSTRACT

Educators' responsibility to cultural diversity among students is discussed. It is suggested that the presence of cultural diversity in the classroom seriously threatens the educative process when student and teacher are not connecting due to words and language. The educator's training tends to consist of jargon, stereotypic assessments, and American values; the application of such training does nothing to ease pupils who feel isolated into active classroom participation. Professors must have knowledge of what to convey and how to impart this wisdom to learners who represent more than one culture or social condition. It is the educator's responsibility to maintain teaching goals; to communicate in harmony with traditional and worldly patterns found in cultures; and to stimulate trust and enthusiasm in learners. Educators should also be conversant in the specific culture of their students. The way members of each culture view relationships with authority figures and how they respond to opportunities for betterment is also essential information for educators. Methods employed by faculty need to be connected to each culture's learning patterns. Suitable learning is evaluated by universal cultural standards. Faculty can capitalize on this by taking the position that they are simply one culture sharing with another culture. (SW)

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY: AN EXPECTATION FOR TEACHING

by

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Culture happens when man is a member of society (Tylor, 1929). Society consists of organized groups. Therefore, man, as a member of society and as part of a designated group, influence culture within his environs (Tylor, 1929; Honigmann, 1963; Hilliard, 1985). By definition, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1929; Webster's New World Dictionary, 1982). Accepting this premise, culture, then, becomes the product of action. Tylor (1929) propositioned that every culture consists of three interrelated dimensions: order, process and goals. Tylor (1929) and White (1949) reported that cultural order encompasses the spatial-temporal patterns of human relationships - patterns which begin with the simplest of form, that of the family, to the most complex, that of the world. In short, culture has a past, present and future - all of which evolve through time in some form or another. Language is the median by which this transition occurs. Language is a universal distinction of human groups (Landes, 1965). Each member of society is trained to respond according to the patterns of his tradition - that of the family as well as to universal expectations - that of the world. Because language is universally and primarily verbal, our ability to comprehend it is predicated upon the adequacy of interpretation. Hence, a common denominator, or bridge of understanding, must be present in order for man to adequately interpret the universal language. Fries (1940) and Webster's New World Dictionary (1982) define Standard English as the particular type of English or dialect

which is used in the conduct of the important affairs of peoples. English has become a social and class dialect in the United States. (Hilliard, 1985; Bellugi, 1964). Therefore, if one's basic language development does not proximate the majority speech, then such individual experiences difficulty in interpretations, and, ultimately, with integration into major society. Such difficulty leads to lack of understanding and isolation - a potential hinderance to the educative process.

The second dimension, process or enculturation, is manifested through acculturation - the universal process by which people living in culture arrange (1) to transmit what is most important in their way of life from one generation to the next, and (2) to engage in amending and renewing these ways whenever they perceive that change is necessary to the common good of their environment (Tylor, 1929; Honigmann, 1963; Kroeber, 1944). When acculturation transpires over time, assimilation occurs. Needless to say, the processes of culture often times generate tensions and even upheavals within the individual and society. These strains and imbalances result in distorted views of society's expectations which are, then, reflected in various cultural groups.

Education has been found to be governed by enculturation (Kimball, 1956' Ianni, 1967). The intention of education is the global welfare and learning of all mankind (Glass, 1959). Based upon the principle that culture is learned behavior, education, then, becomes intrinsically interwoven into the framework of culture. Cultural patterns, transmitted through teaching and learning, will continue to

be as long as there is human life. The field of education must recognize this process if it is to capitalize upon the benefits of enculturation. Stanley, et. al. (1956) reported that the educator's major responsibility is to initiate each generation into the objective order of culture. This order is evident in nature and awaits perception and transference into inherent law. Education, in terms of its cultural context, similates an operational view of culture related to the progressivist philosophy of education. Knowledge, then is thereby formulated as an active re-creative agent of enculturation to much greater extent than in the case of the essentialist-superorganic partnership.

The learning process is principally one of conditioning. Bernstein (1961) reported individuals acquire knowledge by responding to stimuli of an alien or different environment. Cofer (1963) and Jensen (1968) found learning to be fundamentally a process of personality formulation through emotional acknowledgments prompted by stimuli of persons closest to the learner. Hence, teaching and learning become interwoven with culture. They are inseparable.

The connection of learning as conditioning to teaching as acquired knowledge becomes an intrinsic component of enculturation.

Finally, the third dimension of culture - goals - highlights two concerns. The first addresses the issue of each culture having ownership to its own unique goals and secondly, the issue of commonality in goals found across cultures. If we presume that all cultures have implicit or explicit goals (purposes toward which they

endeavor to move with some sense of directions), we can further hypothesize that all cultures possess a sense of values, attitudes, morals, and beliefs germaine to the specific culture. Such a method to cultural goals clearly draws upon the nature and types of values as a functional theory of ethics. The controversy of this approach is that educators need to study the values of people cross-culturally. Such research promotes an awareness and understanding of commonalities in cultures as well as observation of how such goals function within the cultures. This cultural relativism leads to assessing every culture by its own goals and not by majority goals. Such merit amplifies the educative process.

The relation of goals to that of process and order becomes decisive. The goals of any culture help to choose the process or processes that are needed to reach its continuents: how a culture performs consistently relates to what that culture strives to accomplish. Likewise, the classes of order instituted by a culture are molded by what its values condone. The multifaceted dimension of cultural pluralism present in our society poses a critical question for today's educators: What is the educator's responsibility to cultural diversity in the classroom?

Glass (1959) stated the intention of education to be the welfare of man living in culture. Any policy of education that shadows this vision has abandoned its basic principle. In acknowledging the existence of mankind, with all its entanglements, as the supreme purpose of education, then, clearly, professors must realize what this

question encompasses. Education, the process of learning, has the responsibility of aiding every pupil or scholar in becoming cognizant of their insurrectionist references coupled with assisting each pupil obtain a greater understanding of human purpose through active partnership.

Our society serves as a microcosm of the world's races, languages, and social conditions. In American universities, "words" serve the median through which man learns of ideas, values, skills, details of knowledge, etc. Abundant use of this prime tool often fails educators in their quest to impart vital knowledge, meaning and understanding to students. Educators tend to use words expositorily, reflecting their own cultural origins and heritages. Such use often alienates, throttles, or even restricts exploratory responses between professors and students of diversified cultures where expressions and definitions radiate or are independent of one another. One word can have an omnibus of meanings, requiring clarification by sound, gesture, intonation or emotion. In multicultural classroms of today, professors are obligated to know duality of meanings and to neutralize differences among the cultures represented in their classes. The presence of cultural diversity in today's classroom presents a serious threat to our educative process when pupil and instructor are not connecting due to words and language.

Professors must have knowledge on <u>WHAT</u> to convey and <u>HOW</u> to impart this wisdom to learners who represent more than one culture or social condition. It is the educator's responsibility to maintain teaching

goals; to communicate in harmony with traditional and worldly patterns found in cultures; and to stimulate trust and enthusiasm in learners. It is further charged that educators are conversant on the specific cultures of their students as well as their own. How each culture views relationships with authority figures and how they respond to opportunities for betterment is also essential information for educators to have in their possession. It is imperative that faculty work in ways comprehensible to each group. The methods employed need to be connected to each culture's learning patterns.

Faculty should be supported in cultivating emotional ties and building professional affinities with the social groups or cultures with whom they are relating. Because culture is transmitted through personality and nature and because personalities emerge in society through culture, personality and culture are intertwined. Education guides this process. Suitable learning is evaluated by universal cultural standards. Faculty can capitalize upon this by taking the position that they are simply one culture sharing with another culture. This reduces personal and emotional involvements while allowing the educator to focus on his purpose: tendering or offering knowledge and learning experiences to all participants. The educator's form of relating must not alienate the student. Too often, faculty fail to understand and to recognize sanctioned responses from their students. In these cases, neither group achieves maximum learning and the professor has responded irresponsibly towards the learner.

A lack of awareness about the cultures of their students causes educators to rely solely upon their professional training - training which has mostly consisted of jargon, stereotypic assessments, and American values. Minority groups and subcultures, often turned off or perplexed by these interactions and acknowledgments, respond to the educator in opposites or through withdrawal.

Professors can more effectively connect with their students by asking themselves: "How can I make learning meaningful and within reach of each student in my classroom?" When faculty fail to accept responsibility for teaching each pupil in their class, they reject their profession and penalize their students.

Educators must accept this responsibility since their mission is to teach American traditions to populations of varied origins as well as integrating the traditions of others into the American custom.

Because cultural origins are central to human processes of communication and learning, faculty should select materials, styles, forms, and programs of instruction relevant to their student's background. This means faculty should be responsible leaders, worthy of the title. The conscience that an educator has to appreciate other cultures does not preclude his own values or professional goals; it does, however, mean that he should share these values and increase his own understanding of his values by correlating them with the values, beliefs and morals of other cultures.

If students are reached through the primary principles of their own cultures, they become accessible and open to new experiences and

learnings which will, in turn, become an extension of their mother culture.

Perhaps in order to gain cultural awareness of their pupils, professors need to mingle with individuals, families, and social functions within the communities they serve. This means returning to antiquated teachings when educators were active participants in the community. The present isolation of teachers from society, physically and psychologically, promotes staleness, apathy and ignorance.

Americanized or acculturated educators must seize responsibility for translating cultural differences to their pupils. Curriculums of higher education must incorporate these teachings to insure adequate preparation of faculty for diversified classrooms. Minority cultures then become accepted as sources of strength rather than weakness. The implications for education become improved standards of instruction and a preferred, more informed society.

In summary, the profession of education can no longer afford to neglect cultural diversity in society. Professors can no longer experience the luxury of total sciolism in understanding and relating to their pupils in the classroom. The omission of anthropology and other behavioral sciences, except psychology, in educational curriculums speaks to the gross scarcity and retardedness of current educational programs. Current educators have not been given significant opportunity to learn cultures and experience differentness in society. This inexposure has helped to perpetuate the myths and stereotypic attitudes of other cultures and has caused these cultures

to either withdraw or to rebell against American values and ideas. This behavior is not due to desire but to self protection and survival. As long as these occurrences prevail, instruction or education will not accomplish its primary aim: global welfare and learning of mankind.

Every grouping has a culture uniquely its own; mankind is the result and expression of culture. There are no identical cultures within society. The divisiveness among cultures distinguishes one culture from another and creates different strata of position and power. Classes emerge from the structure of cultures. Educators are manipulated by personal value judgments and morals which are reflected in their interactions with students. When these values, beliefs and morals are in opposition, the pupil suffers and our educational systems falters.

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